

At 6 pm on 12th June 1982 the happy band of Pam Ashton, Pete Rafferty, Eddie Craig, Eric Maymon and myself strode into Keswick in high spirits and excellent condition having completed the F.M.C. Lakes Three Thousanders Meet in twelve hours. No, let's be truthful, literary license can be taken too far. It was gone 10 pm, we were pretty knackered (but still going strong) and we had taken over sixteen hours. A brief report of how we got there is given below.

The sunshine was dappling the Fells at 5 am as we prepared for a 6 am start and it quickly became obvious the most difficult part of the day might be getting the editor out of his pit. It seems he was working even harder than usual at his "laid back approach to mountaineering". You may have noticed this approach - it involves recceing Munros for a day or two from the beach or pub and then playing crazy golf instead. He damn near worked too hard at it as the rest of us were in the car park when he managed to stagger from the hut, swigging his pint of milk and looking distinctly more "dragged through a hedge backwards" than "laid back". Whatever happened to the Ed Craig I used to know?

We set off from the Moot Hall at eight minutes past six and by quarter past, as we retraced our steps after a wrong turning, it began to look as though the second hardest bit might be finding our way out of Keswick. The sun shone; here and there wisps of cloud caressed the Fells; and before 7 am Pam (and Raff.) were down to their bikinis - roll on mid-day! I pushed the pace a little down Borrowdale anxious to be safely passed "The Scafell" before opening time. However, at Seathwaite there was no way I could get them past the sign declaring that "teas, ices, sandwiches" etc. were on sale within. There had already

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been talk of lynching the Meet Leader so I resigned myself to the fact that anticipated completion time of twelve to fifteen hours was optimistic. Pots of tea, ice-cream, choc-ices, scones, sausage rolls, tea-cakes, etc. later, we set off up Scafell. Unfortunately, by this time, cloud had rolled over the higher Fells but it cleared from the top the instant we arrived and we lazed in the sunshine for a while enjoying the seaward views. The Pike remained clagbound. Two down, two to go.

Predicted time for Scafell Pike was between 12 noon and 2 pm.. We arrived at approximately 2.30 pm., Ed via Foxes Tarn and the rest of us via Broad Stand and the foolhardy but heroic rescue of a nearby crag-fast sheep.

On again to Stake Pass via Esk Hause and Angle Tarn - still going strong. The ascent of High Raise doesn't look much on the map - ugghh - don't be fooled. We regrouped on the summit but quickly moved off, teeth chattering.

In view of the small number taking part (evidently most F.M.C. members are well balanced, sane individuals), it was decided to carry our own food etc. and not have "feeding stations". However, Chrissie Ikin and Barry had volunteered to be at Wythburn at 3 pm. to give us support. There was no sign of them (at 6 pm) and we made our way along the track but, round the corner, there they were, cheery and very welcoming. Unfortunately, they had just polished off the hot drinks they had brought for us. Still, the cold rice pudding, Milky Ways etc. went down a treat.

By this time, the enjoyment had begun to go out of the walk a little - we had already covered 34 miles and approx. 8,500 feet of ascent and still had to climb up and down Helvellyn and walk along the road to Keswick (approx. 12 miles and 2,600 feet of ascent - a fair day's walk still to go).

In deference to the physical and mental condition of the party, Eric declared that we would take it easy up Helvellyn - nevertheless we reached the summit in under an hour and were sitting in the bar of the King's Head at Thirlspot in well under two hours. It's perhaps as well he didn't think we should press on at all speed. A couple of pints went down nicely and we were soon marching swiftly down the road, minds wonderfully concentrated on fish and chips.

Total time taken including stops, 16 hours and 18 minutes.  
Distance - 46 miles; approx. 11,000 feet of ascent and descent.

Amazingly we were all able to get out of bed the next day. At lunchtime Eric and I were sitting quaffing out pints in the King's Arms at Burton in a self-satisfied, laid back sort of way when Ed re-appeared beamingly happily. He looked even more self-satisfied than we felt. Had he managed to seduce the serving wench, or (more likely) been seduced by her? Had he just bumped into W.A. Poucher in the car park? No, it was a far more magnificent achievement, he'd managed the four steps from the gents. without assistance.

Thanks to all those club members who offered or gave assistance, in particular Barry and Chrissie, Liz and Kath, Gerry (who was prepared to be at Seathwaite at 4 am if we'd opted for a midnight start), Glen Shirley (a sub twelve hour superstar) for advice on logistics and Guy Duxbury who provided telephone cover from his Threlkeld home in case anyone should retire.

Also, thanks to Raff. for providing splendid certificates for the Team. He did a very professional job (courtesy of B.D.P.?) and I intend to commission him to do me a "This is to certify that Martin Pickup has climbed Everest" certificate and perhaps one for Annapurna.

After such a blissful (or should it be blisterful) experience we are now eager to try further epics and the following are possibilities for future expeditions:-

1. Orrest Head, without sherpas (if we can park near enough)
2. Gummors How from the ice-cream stall.
3. A two-day backpacking trip from Rydal to Grasmere via Loughrigg Fell.